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A Policy-Centered Analysis of Intergovernmental Cooperation: Swiss Concordats in Public Debates

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Keywords: Competences & Capacity, Intergovernmental cooperation, Media analysis, Participation, Resources, Swiss concordats

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1) Introduction

Cooperation between political communities, which involves pooling and delegation of resources (cf. Hooghe & Marks 2014), is ambiguous by nature. On the one hand, cooperating communities can enhance their problem-solving and governance capacity and thereby achieve better policy outputs. On the other hand, cooperation always comes along with a certain loss of self-determination and autonomy which may hamper a community's control over the respective policy. After engaging in cooperation, a community is not the sole center of policy-making and governance anymore, but shares its position with its collaborators (Bevir 2006, Hupe & Edwards 2012, Sassen 2008). Politics become co-politics. Intergovernmental cooperation, in this sense, entails a certain *trade-off* between autonomy of decision making and effectiveness of public goods provision (cf. Dahl & Tufte 1972 for a similar argument with respect to the size of political entities).

Despite this concession, horizontal cooperation between political communities becomes increasingly common. It can be informal, brief, and ad hoc in nature, like the exchange of information between participants during a forum or a meeting. Or, alternatively, cooperation can be formal, lasting, and institutionalized, like in associations or through contractual agreements in which the joining communities oblige themselves to pool their resources to achieve an agreed upon goal (cf. Hulst & Van Montfort 2007, 10, Vatter 2014, 135).The phenomenon of horizontal cooperation can be observed on all different hierarchical levels – between nation states, between member states of federations, and between municipalities (Hooghe & Marks 2003, 234-235) – but its intensity increases as one approaches the bottom of the hierarchy.

The reasons for intergovernmental cooperation (IGC) are well documented and described. For example, pooling of resources can make the delivery of policies more effective or cost-efficient. Especially in times of austerity, cooperation might thus even become a necessity to provide some policies at all (Hulst & Van Montfort 2007, Sørensen & Torfing 2014, 241). Or consider more ideological factors. Two or more communities might share similar, or even the same, values and belief systems. Based on these common grounds, those communities might already agree on means and instruments of their policies, and hence find it helpful to coordinate their behavior and pool their resources (Bochsler 2009, Bhatti & Hansen 2011).

These established approaches normally focus on the explanation of the total amount of cooperation a political community engages in. Yet, they do not differentiate between different cooperation intensities of a community in different policy fields. That is, they under-specify why communities are more cooperative in some policy fields than in others. Empirically, however, the intensity of intergovernmental cooperation varies considerably across different policy fields. Swiss cantons, for example, cooperate extensively in financial and tax matters but less so in social policy (cf. Vatter 2014, 136). Similarly, the amount of interstate compacts in the US also varies across

policy fields (cf. Bowman & Woods 2010, 350). How, then, can we explain these different intensities in intergovernmental cooperation across policy fields?

We argue that the nature of the aforementioned trade-off between *autonomy* and *effectiveness* varies across policy fields. While in one policy field autonomy might be of crucial importance to a given political community, it might emphasize effectiveness more elsewhere. To pin down these differences, we propose to distinguish policies according to three dimensions. The first dimension refers to the importance of citizen participation. The second to the level and amount of competences a given political community has in a certain policy field. And the third dimension takes into account the cost-benefit ratio and changed access to resources that would result from cooperation. Further, we expect that these dimensions are also reflected in the public debate, in our case in media reporting, on IGC. If the participatory dimension of a given policy is important for a given community, this should translate into a higher salience and emphasis of participatory concepts in media's reporting on that policy. Likewise, the more relevant the dimensions of competences and resources become, the more they are discussed publicly as well.

The remainder of this paper has the following structure. The upcoming section two will briefly discuss existing theories for explaining IGC. After that, we will present the three dimensions for distinguishing policies in section three. Section four will then present the empirical design of our study, in particular discussing media analysis as a viable approach to classify policies empirically. It will also give information on our case, which is the cooperation of Swiss cantons in the form of *concordats*. Section five will present the results of our analysis. Our findings include that participation, competences, and resources have different levels of salience for various policy fields. For example, participation is highly salient in reports on cooperation regarding education, science & culture. Lastly, section six will end this paper with concluding remarks.

2.) Actor-Centered Explanations for Intergovernmental Cooperation

There are many different theories that aim to explain IGC. In general, they belong to at least one of the following four strands. First, there are *functionalist* theories which see IGC as a reaction to a public problem. When a political system – be it on the local, member state, or nation state level – has difficulties to cope with a certain task, IGC might be among the possible solutions (Hulst & Van Montfort 2007, 6-7). When political communities join forces in the production of a certain public good, they can benefit from economies of scale – be it in terms of finances, personnel, administration, or expertise (Steiner 2002, 121-122, Kellermann 2008, 197-201). Thus, when there is "the possibility of mutual economic gains, governments decide to start cooperation" (Lelieveldt & Princen 2011, 34). At the same time, IGC always means a loss of autonomy. From a functionalist perspective, one would therefore expect that political communities only resort to this option when

the gains that can be achieved exceed the costs, i.e. autonomy losses. This means that – ceteris paribus – political communities facing strong (economic) pressures are more prone to cooperate (Kropp 2010, 150).

A second strand is concerned with the impact of the internal political structure of a given system on its interaction with other political systems. Its internal political structure and functioning is seen as an explanation for its cooperation behavior. Bolleyer (2006) argues, for example, that political communities with high internal power-sharing (e.g. in the form of an over-sized government coalition) are also more prone to engage in external power sharing in the form of IGC. The underlying argument is that the loss of autonomy for each political fraction is smaller, since they are already sharing power, and therefore the hurdle for cooperation is smaller as well (Bolleyer & Börzel 2010). Thus, as in functionalist theory, the loss of autonomy is an important variable here. Yet, in this strand it comes into play at another level. Unlike functionalist theory, this more strand of theory does not assume that a political system is a uniform stand-alone actor, but that one has to take a closer look at the different political actors within it. Relative autonomy losses are hence the determining ones.

The third strand also acknowledges the social, political, and spatial context within which a political system is embedded, and the *opportunity structure* that results from it. Studies starting out from this approach assume that one does not only have to look at the political system itself but at the *relations* this system has with others (e.g Bhatti & Hansen 2011). On the one hand, the spatial context in which a political system "resides" is invoked as an explanation. For instance, the number of immediate neighbors often depict the set of potential cooperation partners (Kwon & Feiock 2010, 878). Furthermore, the broader spatio-institutional context is also deemed relevant. Post (2002) shows that in metropolitan areas with a high density of local governments, inter-municipal cooperation is more frequent than in metropolitan areas with a lower density of local governments. This explanation has, again, a functional touch to it: When opportunities are scarce, cooperation will not occur and vice versa. On the other hand, scholars in this strand emphasize the importance of homogeneous social and political structures for IGC to take place. For example, two political communities relatively equal in wealth and/or political ideology are expected to have a higher probability to cooperate than two more heterogeneous ones (Bochsler 2009, Kwon & Feiock 2010). The explanation for this is again linked to autonomy. If a potential cooperation partner has a similar social structure and political leaning, it is likely to have similar interests as well, making compromises more feasible. Cooperation among homogeneous communities allows them to benefit from the virtues of cooperation without having to accept too many of its vices.

Fourth and finally, IGC can also be analyzed from a historical-institutionalist perspective. Bluntly speaking, historical institutionalists assume that present choices of political actors are always

constrained by past choices (Hall & Taylor 1996, 941). For IGC, this means, for example, that existing cooperative agreements impact later ones. This impact of previous collaborations on the probability of later ones can take very different forms. For instance, existing cooperative relationships can enhance trust between the cooperating partners and facilitate further cooperation in other areas (Steiner 2003, 567). Furthermore, cooperation in one area at time *t-1* can make cooperation in another area at time *t* more likely or even desirable, even if this was not the goal or even under consideration earlier. Pierson (1996), in his seminal work on "The Path to European Integration", shows how cooperation in one policy field has changed actors' power-relations and positions, and facilitated further cooperation, even if this was not the initially intended goal. Thus, this strand highlights the importance of taking the temporal dimension as well as the institutional context into account when analyzing IGC. With respect to the trade-off between autonomy and effectiveness, historical institutionalists show that cooperation happens even if autonomy losses might exceed effectiveness gains through cooperation (Pierson 1996). While this seems to contradict the idea of a trade-off between autonomy and effectiveness at first, one can argue that the costs of not integrating further exceed the autonomy losses *not* because of the gains that can be achieved via cooperation in a new field, *but* because non-cooperation might endanger existing cooperative institutions.

These four different approaches that have been applied to the analysis of IGC have two things in common. First, they all compare similar political communities with respect to their cooperation behavior *in toto* or with respect to one specific policy. Normally, they are interested in the overall extent of cooperation a given community has across different policy fields. Therefore, these approaches look for explanations at the level of the community. Second, functional, structural, and relational explanations all imply that a certain *trade-off* may exist between autonomy and self-determination on the one hand and the benefits of IGC on the other. Hence, in cooperation autonomy is "exchanged" against effectiveness, such as money is exchanged for goods and services. Even further, historical institutionalists would argue that communities are actually limited in their choices regarding this trade-off, given that previous events constrain decisions made now (cf. also Vester 2009). In the following, we will propose an addition to these actor-centered perspectives. We will shift the analytical focus from whole political communities to parts of it, namely to policies, and present three dimensions which we believe are important for explaining the amount of cooperation in a certain area. Assigning a position on these three different dimensions further allows to make a statement about a policy's position with respect to the autonomy-effectiveness trade-off.

3.) A Policy-Centered Explanation for Intergovernmental Cooperation – The 'PCR' Scheme

Our policy-centered approach *complements* the actor-centered approaches and argues that differences in patterns of cooperation can be attributed to systematic differences between policies. This allows for a more fine-grained analysis of cooperation. In particular, it helps to explain why communities often and intensively cooperate in some policies, but are more reluctant to do so in others.

We propose to distinguish policies in accordance with the "PCR" scheme (an abbreviation of its three components): i.) the importance of *participation* for a given community and its members in determining the outcome of a certain policy; ii.) the *competences and capacity* of a political community in a certain policy field, referring to the degree of responsibility and control a given community has over it; iii.) the *resources* that are available in a certain policy field. This component looks at the cost-benefit ratio that comes along with cooperation. In the remainder of this section, we will introduce each component in more detail, arguing that they allow us to distinguish between those policies in which cooperation becomes more likely, and those in which it is less likely. In the end, we will propose a simple typology to classify policies into two ideal types, namely into *core policies*, in which cooperation is the least likely, and *periphery policies*, where it is the most.

First, policies can differ in the extent to which they attract public attention and citizen's desire for *participation*. Some policies can be highly salient issues and constitutive of a political community's self-perception, while other policies rarely manage to gain public awareness and are highly instrumental in that they "only" manage a certain issue (cf. Hooghe & Marks 2008, 2, Leca 1996). Thus, some policies are important for political communities as centers of deliberation, community-building, and political expression (cf. Manin et al. 1987). They are the locus where citizens express their will for self-determination and provide input to the political system. Such policies are also symbols and represent joint efforts of a community, and, consequently, of its collective identity. In this regard, policies produce communities (cf. also Keating & Wilson 2014, 840-841). Other policies only have a marginally developed expressive function for a political community. There is no disagreement about *how* things should be done, it is only important *that* they are done, which also could imply a public *disinterest* in a policy such as water provision and waste disposal. These policies have a merely instrumental function for political communities. On the *participation* dimension, policies can vary according to the extent to which the members of a political community – i.e. citizens – deem it important to participate in elaborating solutions to a certain problem or to voice their opinion on a certain matter. We would expect that the more important this expressive function in a given policy field is, the more difficult it is for a political community to cooperate in that field. This is because cooperation entails pooling and delegation, hence it implies a reduction of possibilities for citizens to participate.

Second, policies can also be distinguished in accordance to the scope of influence and control or the *competences and capacity* a given community has in a given field. Hupe and Hill (2009) and Hupe and Edwards (2012) distinguish three different dimensions of governance. The first is the *constitutive* dimension, where institutions are created and established. Here, the focus lies on structure. The second dimension is the *directional* one, it is concerned with content. Finally, the *operational* one is the third dimension, and it focuses on process and "getting things done". Note the hierarchy that is created across the three dimensions. On the constitutive level, the degree of control and influence, but also responsibility, is the highest. It is lower for the directional scope, and the lowest for the operational one. If we link this to our analytical framework, this means that political communities can have different competences and capacity in different policy fields. They might have constitutive competences and capacity – and thus a very high degree of self-determination – in one policy field, whereas they only have directional competences and capacity in another one. We argue that political communities are more reluctant to cooperate with other political communities in a given policy field, if their competence and capacity is of a higher level in the respective domain. This assumption is again linked to the trade-off between autonomy and effectiveness. The amount of autonomy that is lost is higher in policy fields where governance capacity is high than in policy fields where it is rather low.

A third and final distinction refers to the *resources* a political community has in a policy field and what that community expects to happen with these resources after cooperation has begun. That is, the perceived outcomes and consequences of IGC. First, the community in question might expect changes in the distribution of costs and benefits (Wilson 1974), i.e. *economic* consequences. For example, cooperation might lead to a wider distribution of costs, and a more evenly shared burden, and thus to an increase in community resources in the respective area. In particular in urban settings, cities in metropolitan areas often bear the costs for services that are not only used by their residents but also by residents from surrounding municipalities (Kübler 2006, Dreier et al. 2014). Thus, for a city at the center of a metropolitan area, it might be beneficial in terms of economic resources to cooperate in some policy areas, such as health care, infrastructure, or cultural institutions to distribute the burden of providing these services more evenly. Secondly, the *political* consequences are also of relevance. In particular, one can argue that cooperation will either *increase* or *decrease* the leeway of communities. An increase means that the range and leverage of options and choices for the community is enlarged; in this respect, cooperation can be *enabling*. On the other hand, cooperation might also lower range and leverage, and hence it might have *constraining* consequences. For example, cooperation can be used "instrumentally" to gain control over issues that otherwise would have been out of reach for the involved partners (cf. Klijn & Skelcher 2008, Skelcher 2010). Thus, by cooperation, political communities might increase their political resources

in the given area. Further, existing cooperation schemes can increase the political costs of not cooperating – i.e. to not offend partners and endanger well-functioning existing collaborations – and thus make cooperation more likely. In short, communities can (and will) anticipate and evaluate the consequences from cooperation schemes, and may express their preference or dislike for them accordingly. Policies can therefore be distinguished according to the expected gains in political and economic resources that result from cooperation.

These arguments encourage enriching and complementing the actor-centered perspective with a policy-centered one, and hence allow qualifying the trade-off between autonomy and effectiveness resulting from cooperation of political communities. A loss of autonomy is especially relevant if the expressive function of a given policy is dominating, since it hinders the possibility of citizens to participate. On the other hand, if the focus lies more on the delivery of policy outputs, the trade-off between autonomy and cooperation might not be perceived as salient (cf. Scharpf 1970, 1990). In addition, especially constitutive competences and capacities are pertinent for the trade-off. Here, the most fundamental assumptions and prescriptions are made and inscribed into policies (cf. Ingram & Schneider 1990, 1997, Schneider & Ingram 1997). The argument is that more autonomy is lost if communities cooperate in areas where their competences and capacity are constitutive, compared with cooperation in policy areas where they only have directional or operational competences and capacities. And finally, the expected outcomes of cooperation play an important role as well. Especially if the regime of cooperation in a policy area is distributing costs unevenly, or if it is substantially constraining the choices of the involved partners, i.e. diminishing their resources, it becomes less attractive.

Although these three policy dimensions may vary independently of each other, they do converge in two extreme points (see Figure 1). We have called the first one “core” policies, because policies near this point of convergence lie at the very heart of the identity, self-perception, and self-determination of political communities. In these core policies, autonomy is very important and cooperation is thus very unlikely. The trade-off between autonomy and effectiveness gains by cooperation is so loop-sided that communities will try to avoid cooperation as best as they can. On the other hand, the three dimensions converge in a second extreme point, which is called “periphery” policies. Regarding those policies, cooperation does not threaten identity and self-perception of communities as strongly, and hence it is more likely. Furthermore, the gains that can be achieved via cooperation are perceived to be very high. Thus here, the trade-off is loop-sided towards effectiveness and cooperation is very likely.

Figure 1 about here

4. Research Design

Empirical researchers classifying policies into different types usually follow one out of two approaches (Smith 2002). The first one relies on "objective" indicators, such as administrative data (the budget in a certain domain), structural characteristics (the number of citizens using a certain service), or legal documents (who is responsible for what). However, there is a vast universe of potentially suitable indicators and the result of the classification highly depends on the indicators chosen. To avoid arbitrariness, this choice must be well justified. The second approach to the classification of policies relies on perceptions. Smith (2002), for example, uses a taxonomic approach to policy classification. In particular, he proposes to analyze the perceptions that individuals have about policies. He then tests whether the indicators derived from a recent policy typology cluster in such a way as to reproduce the patterns of individuals' perceptions.

The present paper follows the second approach; we analyze the perceptions of "the public" on IGC between cantons in Swiss media. This was done for several reasons. First, one of our dimensions, *participation*, is difficult to measure via an analysis of legal documents, institutional settings, or structural indicators, because this approach would miss the dynamical evolution of this dimension. An issue may become highly salient and controversial in a relatively short period of time, and the public's desire for participation and expression raises with it. Another dimension in our scheme, *resources*, tries to capture the expected outcome of IGC in a given domain. This dimension is perception-based by nature, since it is about an ex ante evaluation of the cost-benefit ratio – both in economic and in political terms – of IGC. Second, contemporary political processes are always *mediated*, meaning that the different actors participating in the process do not only interact directly, but also indirectly through the news media (Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999, 248). Adding to this, these processes are also *framed* in a certain way, i.e. one or several interpretations of a process and its consequences are offered (be it by the media, or by public officials) that correspond in varying degrees to the "hard" facts on the issue at stake (cf. Esser 2013, 155-157). Therefore, it may be less important to look at the actual legal foundations in a certain domain, e.g. the competences and capacity of a political community in a given area, than to investigate how these legal foundations are *perceived,* because there is the potential for deviation between the two. For example, citizens might overestimate a political entity's competences and capacity in a given domain and thus be more reluctant regarding cooperation, while politicians might underestimate their political resources in another.

Media content analysis is usually not understood as analysis of perceptions. However, media content – like individual perceptions – can be seen as a certain construction of social reality (Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999, 250) and should in any case not be treated as a source of "objective" information about an issue. The way this "construction" comes about depends upon a complex set of

factors. For instance, journalists give more attention to some events than to others and thereby set the agenda for public debates (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, 10-11). Furthermore, they do not report on issues in a neutral way but by framing it – by highlighting some and leaving out other aspects of a topic (ibid.). This means that media coverage always transports a certain idea and interpretation of an issue. Hence, citizens and political actors views about, and interpretations of, political processes are also shaped by the way media report on them (e.g. Brewer & Gross 2005, Maier 2011).

4.1 Case Selection and Data

To analyze our scheme empirically, we investigate IGC between Swiss cantons. Switzerland has a federal structure with three hierarchical levels. From lowest to highest, these are the municipalities, which are embedded in the cantons, which in turn are embedded in the federal superstructure. Although this hierarchy exists, it is the cantons that hold most of the competences (legally), while the municipalities and the federal level are only responsible for those issues that are explicitly handed over to them (Fleiner 2002, 99). Further, cantons are subjects to international law and able to engage in contractual agreements with each other. Thus, when it comes to issues for which they have competences, cantons may choose whether to engage in cooperation and may decide the conditions of this cooperation on their own (Vatter 2014, 120-122). Empirically, cantons do engage in IGC frequently, in particular in the form of *concordats*, i.e. contractual agreements. Bochsler and Sciarini (2006, 29) counted a total of 760 valid concordats in 2005 between cantons.

For our purposes, concordats are an interesting case to study for three reasons. First, given the rather large degree of competences that cantons have, concordats can be found in large numbers on a large number of issues. This provides a high degree of variation between different concordats in terms of contractual parties involved, policy field, as well as width of the concordat (how many partners are involved?) and its depth (how intense is the resulting cooperation?). Second, the strong direct-democratic instruments of Switzerland involve citizens in many political procedures. As a result, politics, even of local issues, is discussed frequently and intensively among the public, and media report often on concordats. In this respect, we can analyze how the media *frames* concordats and how it interprets them (cf. Esser 2013, 155-157, Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999, 250). Thirdly, given the aforementioned points, we expect that the variation between different concordats is reflected in the reporting on them as well. In other words, we expect that reporting on concordats from a given policy field will systematically put more emphasis on, for example, the participatory dimension and less on others. For concordats from other policy fields, the media will focus more on capacity and competences, or resources.

To investigate media coverage on concordats between Swiss cantons, we analyze newspaper articles from one of the largest Swiss newspapers over the last ten years. Given that Switzerland has

four different official languages, the media landscape is somewhat divided along linguistic barriers (Marcinkowski 2006, 399). Swiss-German is the most common language, however, officially used in 21 out of 26 cantons. We hence focus our analysis on this part of Switzerland, well aware that this somewhat limits the generalizability of our results. In particular, we have included the Zurich-based "*Tages-Anzeiger*" in our analysis, which is one of the most widely-read newspapers in Switzerland[1]. Access to the articles of this newspaper was provided by LexisNexis.

We have searched for articles that include (in German, including variants) "concordat", "inter-cantonal cooperation", "inter-cantonal agreement", and "inter-cantonal contract". Articles that referred to *religious* concordats (i.e. contracts with the Holy See) have been excluded. For a search interval of ten years (2005-01-01 to 2014-12-31) this resulted in a database of 459 articles.[2]

4.2) Methods

We relied on dictionary coding for our empirical analysis. In this method, the researcher creates a set of key-words for each concept she is interested in. These key-words are then counted to determine how often they appear in the text corpus, i.e., within each unit of text that is part of the analysis. Usually, this raw count is transformed into a relational scale, e.g. a proportion, to be used further in the analysis (Garry & Laver 2000, Lowe et al. 2011). Hence, dictionary coding is a quantitative content analysis (Neuendorff 2002) during which the researcher generates *numerical* data from her text corpus. This approach allows to measure the *salience* of the concepts she is interested in, and is based on the assumption that the more often a given text mentions the key-words that belong to each of these concepts, the more important or relevant this concept is.

Dictionary coding can be employed with the help of computers and is a rather cheap, fast, and reliable technique for content analysis. Its validity, however, depends on the text corpus chosen and the dictionaries used, but also on the interpretation of the results. Having presented the text corpus above, we will address the remaining two points below.

4.3) The Dictionary – Operationalization of Policy Fields and PRC

To determine how much emphasis is put on each of our three dimensions in public debate on a certain policy area, one needs to distinguish between different policy fields in the text corpus. To do so, we have used the topical typology of concordats proposed by Bochsler and Sciarini (2006). They distinguish six different policy fields or concordat areas for the Swiss case based on an extensive

[1] On its website, the *Tages-Anzeiger* self-declares to have 466'000 subscribers, which would equal to about 13.2% of all Swiss households.

[2] For pre-processing the articles, Python scripts have been used (available upon request). Note that dictionary coding does neither require stemming or stop-word removal, nor the removal of numbers or punctuation marks.

analysis of all Swiss concordats from 1848 to 2005. In figure 2 below, the areas are displayed together with the total number of concordats in each of the fields since the foundation of the Swiss state in 1848. We have adopted this typology and hence distinguish between those six different policy fields. Further, articles in the *Tages-Anzeiger* usually clearly identify concordats by names. For example, the concordat on the "harmonization of mandatory education" is referred to by the literal "harmos", and it belongs in category 1, i.e. "education, science & culture". Based on these names, we constructed a first dictionary to determine to which of Bochsler and Sciarini's (2006) categories each text of the corpus belongs. This raw count of the categories has been re-coded as a percentage score, to indicate how much of its content a given article uses to indicate them.

Figure 2 about here

To determine how much emphasis each text is putting on participation, competences & capacity, and resources, we have constructed a dictionary for each of the three concepts (available upon request). Since we used Will Lowe's software *Yoshikoder* to apply the dictionaries, they follow the specifications of this program. Although, due to limitations in space, we cannot discuss the three dictionaries in detail, we still give a brief introduction to their core features. The example key-words given below have been translated from German into English for the purpose of this paper. Hence, they depict the concepts on which the German dictionary is based. However, they are not a direct and literal translation of the German key-words, and in particular omit truncation, stemming, and the use of wild-cards.

Participation: The participation dimension of our scheme indicates how important it is for the community to express itself through politics. Hence, this dictionary includes key-words to identify specific actors within communities such as "citizens", "parties", or "the people". Further, it also includes political instruments such as "vote", "referendum" or "ballot". Another group of key-words refers to specific outcomes of participation, like "accept", "refuse", or "discordant". Finally, we have also included more abstract terms such as "democracy", "conflict", and "transparency".

Competences & Capacity: This dimension indicates which actor on which federal level is responsible for a given policy, and whether this responsibility is more constitutive, directional, or operational. In the dictionary, we hence have included several public actors that can hold such responsibilities. This includes for example "(federal / cantonal / municipal) administration" and "department", but also "(federal / cantonal / district) courts" or "committees". We have also included several policy-related key-words like "regulation" or "ordinance". Finally, there are more general terms like "harmonize", "competence", "responsibility", or "constitution".

Resources: This dimension indicates both resources of communities and access to them. Thus in this dictionary, there are key-words like "[Swiss] franks", "CHF", or "budget". There are also terms indicating "money", "costs", "efficiency", and similar more general concepts. Finally, we have also included key-words referring more to the dynamical nature of resources, such as "increase", "improve", or "restrict".

4.4) Analysis and Regression

The raw counts of dictionary coding should not be interpreted directly, but translated into more meaningful scales (Lowe et al. 2011). In our case, we are interested in interpreting participation, competences & capacity, and resources and their respective salience with respect to different policy areas. This means that a measure is needed for each of these concepts to determine its relative significance in a given article. This paper employs two different measures to capture the salience of the different concepts. First, percentage scores determine the relative importance of a certain concept within a given article, and were obtained by dividing the raw count of the concept by the total word count of that article. This resulted in a fraction indicating the "importance" of a certain concept. For example, a given text might have a value of '.05' in participation, meaning that this text devotes 5% of its content to key-words from the participation dictionary. Table 1 (below in section 5) gives an overview of the different concepts transformed in this way. Table A.1 in the appendix shows descriptive statistics for the raw word counts of the different concepts. We call this first measurement the *individual salience* of concepts.

The second measure of salience compares the individual salience of a given concept with the salience of another one. It was calculated with the following formula (Laver & Garry 2000, Lowe et al. 2011):

$$\frac{Raw\ Count_{Dimension1} - Raw\ Count_{Dimension2}}{Raw\ Count_{Dimension1} + Raw\ Count_{Dimension2}} \qquad \text{(Eq. 1)}$$

This resulted in a scale that is bound between -1 and +1, where positive values mean that dimension 1 (e.g. participation) is more salient in a given article than dimension 2 (e.g. competences), while negative values mean dimension 2 is more important than dimension 1. Consequently, a zero indicates that both dimensions are equally salient. Because this measurement indicates how much more salient a dimension is depending on the salience of another dimension, it is called *conditional salience*.

To examine whether there are systematic patterns between the policy field of concordats and the public debate on them regarding participation, competences & capacity, and resources, we have

conducted regression analyses using the policy field scores as independent variables. Both the individual and conditional salience were used as dependent variables in two different estimations. In particular, the former is bound between 0% and 100%. In general, OLS regressions are not suited to explain percentage distributions. This is because, firstly, OLS regressions assume unbound values. Second, if the values of the dependent variable are skewed to the extreme points, error terms are not distributed normally, leading to heteroskedasticity (Papke & Wooldridge 1996, Paolino 2001). However, beta regression can handle percentage scores, because it assumes that the dependent variable is beta-distributed (Paolino 2001, Buckley 2003, Ferrari & Cribari-Neto 2004, Smithson & Verkuilen 2006, Espinheira et al. 2008). In general, beta-distributed values are bound between zero and one, with the notable exclusion of the boundaries of zero and one themselves. The distribution is flexible to depict skewed, symmetrical, uni- or multimodal shapes. Estimation was done with STATA and with the **`betafit`** and **`dbetafit`** command[3]. For the second part of our analysis, i.e. the conditional salience, three separate estimations were calculated, because we compare each participation, competences & capacity, and resources to one another. The dependent variables of this second part are bound between -1 and 1, which makes them difficult to estimate through regression techniques. For the present work in progress, we report the results of an OLS regression with the full awareness of the short-comings stemming from this endeavor.

5.) Results

A look at Table 1 below gives a first impression on the salience of the PCR dimensions and the different policy fields in media coverage on Swiss concordats. Several things are worth mentioning. First, one can see that the absolute salience of participation, competences & capacity, and resources varies. While competences & capacity is most frequently referred to, closely followed by participation, key-words pertaining to the resources dimension are only appearing half as much in our text corpus compared to the other two dimensions.

Table 1 about here

This difference might be explained by the nature of the dimensions with respect to cooperation. Both the participatory opportunities as well as competences & capacity of a given political entity are likely to be restricted in the course of entering a concordat, while a political community might indeed benefit resource-wise. The reason that participation and competences & capacity are referred to more often might lie in the tendency of the media to have a certain "negativity bias", i.e. to cover negative things more often than positive ones or to criticize more than to praise (cf. Bell 1991).

[3] Written by Maarten L. Buis, Nicholas J. Cox, & Stephen P. Jenkins.

Because a concordat might entail a certain drawback for participation and competences & capacity, these two dimensions are covered more often in media reports. Yet in direct comparison between the two, i.e. their conditional salience score, competences & capacity is more salient on average than participation, making the competences & capacity dimension the most important one of the three. Yet, participation is the dimension with the highest salience in a single newspaper article.

When turning to the six policy fields for concordats we identified based on Bochsler and Sciarini (2006), the following statements can be made. Concordats in the fields of education, science & culture, and state structure & security are covered much more than concordats in more "technical" fields such as infrastructure, economy, and public finances. Health & social security takes an intermediate position. The dominance of education, science & culture and state structure & security can at least partly be attributed to two concordats in the respective fields that received a lot of public attention in recent years. In education, the so-called "Harmos"-concordat aims to harmonize the different cantonal school systems in Switzerland. In the domain of security, the "Hooligan"-concordat aims to establish nation-wide rules and a database to capture hooligans in order to combat the violence in relation to soccer matches. Both of these issues are rather controversial in terms of competences and capacity (Harmos), and violation of fundamental rights (hooligans) in the Swiss public.

This short look at the descriptive picture shows that there is both variance in the salience of different policy fields as well as in the salience of PCR in media reports on concordats. To assess whether there is systematic variation, the results from the beta regression on the individual salience are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 about here

The most salient policy fields in media coverage on Swiss concordats are also the ones that are most strongly correlated with the dimension of participation. When an article is about either education, science & culture, or about state structure & security, discourses on participation are more likely to be found in that article. The other policy fields do not display significant correlations with the participation dimension, which means that participation is strongly debated in policy fields that affect citizens directly. The second dimension of the framework, competences & capacity, is most salient in articles on state structure & security as well as in articles on public finances & taxes. Hence, concordats regarding the very structure of the state, or its financing, evoke strong public responses. Key-words pertaining to the third dimension, resources, are most often mentioned in reports on health & social security as well as in reports on public finances & taxes.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 gives an account of the substantive relationships between policy field and the individual salience of the PCR dimensions. One can see that the relationships between some policy fields and some dimensions are quite substantive. For example, when the number of key-words in an article referring to the policy field of state structure & security changes from its minimum to its maximum, this is associated with an 6.54 percentage point increase in the share of key-words devoted to the dimension of participation. Keeping in mind that the maximum possible change in this dimension amounts to 10.2 percentage points, this can be considered a quite substantive influence. The same holds true for the relationship between the policy field of public finances & taxes and the resources dimension. The maximum change in the number of key-words of this policy field is associated with a 3.38 percentage points increase in individual salience of the resources dimension, given a maximum variance of 4.6 percentage points here.

These results support the idea that the importance of the three different dimensions of a policy varies across different policy fields. In public debates on IGC in Switzerland, some policyfields seem to be more strongly connoted with a discourse on participation, while others depict a stronger link with a discourse on resources. Finally, there are other policy-fields that are not associated with the salience of PCR in public debates, such as infrastructure, transport & environment.

Analyzing the conditional salience of the three dimensions across policy fields confirms this picture. In Table 4 one can see the results for OLS regressions on the conditional salience of the PCR dimensions. Recall that positive values mean that the first dimension is more salient compared to the second one and the other way round (see section 4.4 above).

Table 4 about here

From these models we can derive that the dimension of participation is especially important in media coverage on the policy-field of education, science & culture compared to the other two dimensions. Further, in media reports in the domain of health & social security, discourses on resources are much more frequent than discourses on participation and on competences & capacity, respectively. What is interesting is that in articles on state structure & security, the dimension of participation and of competences & capacity seem to be equally important. However, compared to discourses on resources, debates on competences & capacity seem to be more frequent in media coverage on concordats in that policy field. For the remaining three policy fields, there are no statistically significant effects that would allow to infer a different importance of the three dimensions compared

to each other. However, it is still worth mentioning that for all three policy fields, the signs of the coefficients are pointing away from discourses on participation. In articles that deal with one of these three policy fields, participation seems to be slightly less important than the other two dimensions. All in all, also the analysis of the conditional salience of the three different dimensions tends to support our idea of a different importance of PCR across policy fields, although the three dimensions seem to play an overall more important role in some policy fields than in others.

6.) Conclusion

Cooperation between political communities often involves a trade-off between a community's political autonomy and the effectiveness with which it can provide policies and services. We have argued that this trade-off varies for different policies. In this paper, we have proposed to analyze three different dimensions of a given policy, namely participation, competences & capacity, and resources (PCR). For a first test of the empirical relevance of our framework, we analyzed media coverage on IGC in Switzerland over the last ten years. We indeed found evidence that the salience of the three proposed dimensions varies with respect to different policy fields. While, for example, participation seems to be an important issue in intergovernmental arrangements on education, science & culture, resources are a more salient issue in health & social security.

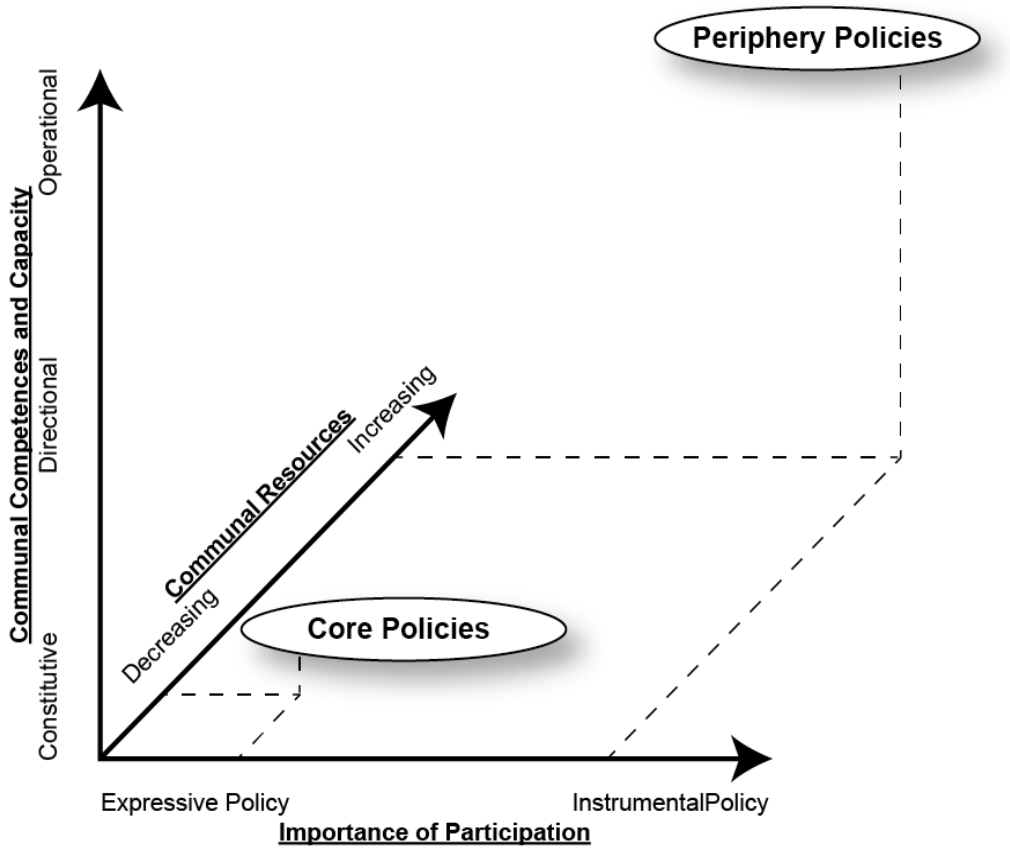
Evidently, our study has several limitations. First, we do not investigate actual levels of IGC in a certain policy field but only the frequency with which concordats are referred to in the media. Still, the distinction between participation, competences & capacity, and resources is meaningful and clearly reflected in the media. Second, the dictionary coding so far only allows to measure the presence of a given concept, but is insensible to other characteristics of the public debate. For example, participation might be discussed within an article in different ways, such as pointing out an *abundance* or *lack of* it. Yet, to identify a concordat – or any other IGC for that matter – as resembling a core or periphery policy, and with it estimate the likelihood of cooperation, this more fine-grained information is needed. Third, we only analyze media coverage of one newspaper. Coverage in other newspaper might be different and hence our analysis might not give an accurate picture of public discourse on IGC in Switzerland.

Future research should investigate the historical development of "critical" concordats, like "Harmos" or the Hooligan-concordat to gain further insights on the relevance and role of participation, competences & capacity, and resources regarding inter-cantonal cooperation in Switzerland. Further, an application of the framework to cooperation in other federal systems might reveal that the relative importance of the three dimensions is dependent on the context. For example, Switzerland has a long lasting tradition of direct-democratic involvement of its citizens. Hence, the public media might emphasize in particular issues of participation *more* than it does so in other

countries. Or consider the question of competences and capacity, in particular in relation to international or supra-national organizations. A loss of competences resulting from *outward* cooperation, i.e. with a partner outside of the given country, might be perceived more gravely than the loss of competences caused by *inward* cooperation. Lastly, discussion on resources always include assumptions, made explicit or not, on the legitimacy of acquiring and spending them (cf. Burns 2005, Wilson 1974). Although IGC might actually reduce the resources of a political community, the public media might frame this as legitimate and – in fact – desirable.

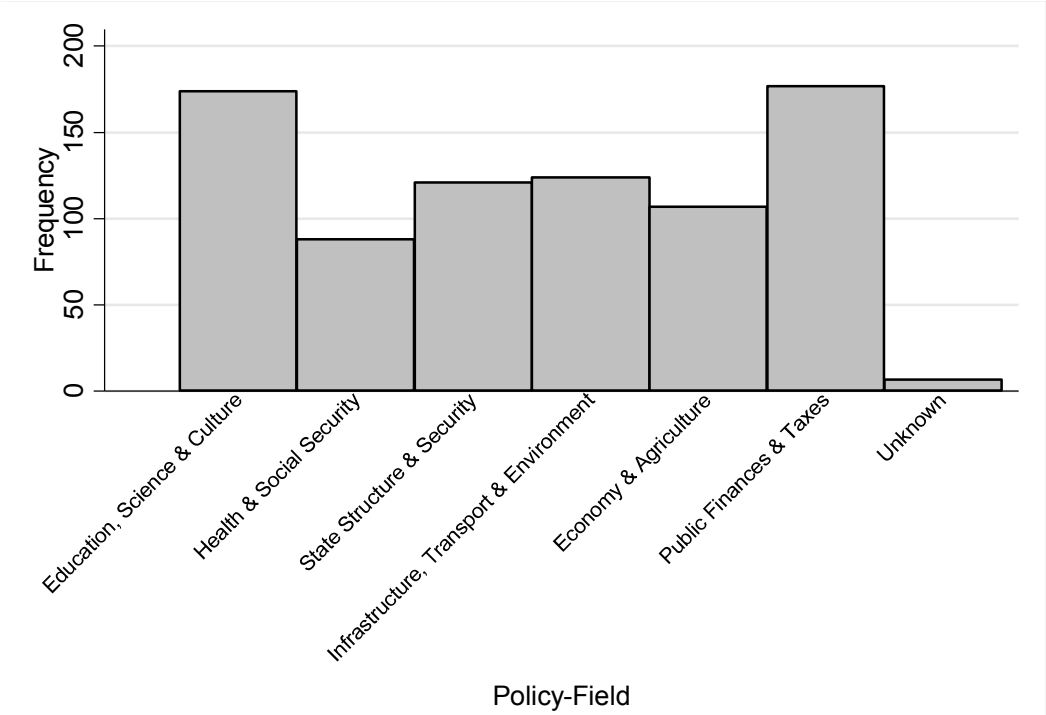
Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Policy-Centered Explanation of IGC – The PCR-scheme



Note: Systematic overview of three explanations of IGC in federal systems, including two points of convergence, in which cooperation is expected to be most likely (periphery policies) and least likely (core policies), respectively.

Figure 2: Number of Concordats per Policy Field



Note: Own calculations based on dataset from Bochsler/Sciarini (2006)

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

PCR DIMENSIONS	Mean	P50	Min	Max	Std. Dev.
Participation	.011	.008	0	.102	.013
Competences & Capacity	.014	.011	0	.072	.012
Resources	.006	.004	0	.046	.008
Participation vs. Competences	-.189	-.155	-1	1	.558
Participation vs. Resources	.187	.241	-1	1	.683
Competences vs. Resources	.373	.444	-1	1	.570
POLICY FIELDS					
Education, Science & Culture	.007	0	0	.075	.011
Health & Social Security	.003	0	0	.056	.009
State Structure & Security	.006	0	0	.118	.013
Infrastructure, Transport & Environment	.001	0	0	.056	.006
Economy & Agriculture	.001	0	0	.085	.007
Public Finances & Taxes	.001	0	0	.040	.003

Note: Articles are the units of analysis, N=459

Table 2: Absolute Salience of PCR

	Participation	Competences & Capacity	Resources
Education, Science & Culture	18.60***	5.11	6.90
	(3.02)	(3.31)	(4.15)
Health & Social Security	-9.86	5.49	9.60*
	(6.83)	(3.61)	(4.02)
State Structure & Security	16.30***	12.25***	-12.78
	(2.08)	(2.23)	(6.84)
Infrastructure, Transport & Environment	-5.92	-.36	-2.25
	(7.57)	(5.42)	(7.84)
Economy & Agriculture	-7.88	3.37	.94
	(12.34)	(4.62)	(6.57)
Public Finances & Taxes	16.23	28.07***	39.10***
	(12.78)	(7.94)	(7.17)
Constant	-4.52***	-4.33***	-4.72***
	(.06)	(.05)	(.07)
AIC	-2508.29	-2815.81	-2300.79
AIC (Null-Model)	-2458.33	-2800.83	-2281.47
BIC	-2476.89	-2783.38	-2270.95
BIC (Null-Model)	-2450.48	-2792.72	-2274.01
Wald Chi2 (6)	90.15***	39.79***	45.70***
N	374	426	308

Note: Articles are units of analysis; Estimation was done with beta-regression in STATA. Numbers of observations vary due to zeros in dependent variables, which are excluded from beta-regression. Significance levels indicated as: *** for p<=0.001; ** for p<=0.01; * for p<=0.05.

Table 3: Discrete Changes for Beta-Regressions

	Participation		Competences & Capacity		Resources	
	Min → Max	+/- ½ SD	Min → Max	+/- ½ SD	Min → Max	+/- ½ SD
Education, Science & Culture	**3.43** (1.00)	**.28** (.05)	.5 (.38)	.08 (.05)	.45 (.33)	.07 (.04)
Health & Social Security	-.58 (.30)	-.08 (.05)	.53 (.4)	.07 (.04)	**.64** (.35)	**.09** (.04)
State Structure & Security	**6.54** (1.76)	**.28** (.04)	**4.24** (1.4)	**.21** (.04)	-.37 (.16)	-.08 (.04)
Infrastructure, Transport & Environment	-.38 (.41)	-.04 (.05)	.03 (.44)	.00 (.05)	-.1 (.33)	-.01 (.04)
Economy & Agriculture	-.49 (.61)	-.04 (.06)	.48 (.76)	.03 (.05)	-.06 (.49)	.00 (.03)
Public Finances & Taxes	1.21 (1.28)	-.06 (.05)	**2.97** (1.37)	**.11** (.03)	**3.38** (1.19)	**.10** (.02)

Note: Calculations are done with debtafit in Stata; Coefficients are percentage point changes, standard errors in parentheses; **Bold**=significant coefficients; All variables held constant at their means; E(participation|x)=1.35; E(competences & capacity|x)=1.5; E(resources|x)=.94

Table 4: Conditional Salience of PCR

	Participation vs. Competences	Participation vs. Resources	Competences vs. Resources
Education, Science & Culture	11.31*** (2.45)	10.36*** (2.97)	-.73 (2.61)
Health & Social Security	-14.16*** (2.85)	-17.48*** (3.46)	-4.73 (3.04)
State Structure & Security	1.55 (2.13)	12.84*** (2.58)	9.85*** (2.26)
Infrastructure, Transport & Environment	-6.58 (4.52)	-.26 (5.48)	3.05 (4.82)
Economy & Agriculture	-7.24 (3.63)	-5.99 (4.39)	-.82 (3.86)
Public Finances & Taxes	-6.22 (9.27)	-15.21 (11.22)	-11.01 (9.87)
Constant	-.21*** (.04)	.10* (.05)	.33*** (.04)
Adj. R^2	.13	.15	.05
F (6, 452)	12.15	14.31	5.28
N	459	459	459

Note: Articles are units of analysis; Estimation was done with OLS regression in STATA. Significance levels indicated as: *** for p<=0.001; ** for p<=0.01; * for p<=0.05.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics Raw Counts

	Mean	P50	Min	Max	Std. Dev.
Participation	4.55	3	0	31	5.01
Competences & Capacity	5.91	4	0	36	5.27
Resources	3.56	2	0	42	5.12
Education, Science & Culture	3.05	0	0	40	5.52
Health & Social Security	1.32	0	0	35	4.27
State Structure & Security	2.23	0	0	24	4.27
Infrastructure, Transport & Environment	.62	0	0	33	2.98
Economy & Agriculture	.32	0	0	45	3.16
Public Finances & Taxes	.20	0	0	9	.89
Total Word Count	505.44	439	28	3094	361.33
Stop-words	192.18	166	9	1224	142.19

Note: Articles are the units of analysis, N=459